NCA
VOC FOR IOP/FN
BACKGROUNDER NO. 5-5733 APRIL 18, 1978
LARRY LESUEUR

FOCUS: GENERAL LUCIUS D. CLARY

ANNCR:

GENERAL LUCIUS D. CLAY, WHO LED THE BERLIN AIRLIFT AND BECAME A SYMBOL OF AMERICAN DETERMINATION TO STAND FAST AGAINST SOVIET COLD WAR PRESSURES ON WEST BERLIN, IS DEAD AT AGE 80.

VOICE:

AS THE ORGANIZER OF THE LEGENDARY BERLIN AIRLIFT, GENERAL LUCIUS D. CLAY, MILITARY GOVERNOR OF GERMA-NY AND COMMANDER OF U.S. FORCES IN EUROPE, MADE DIPLOMATIC, AVIATION AND HUMANITARIAN HISTORY BY AIRLIFTING FOOD, COAL, AND ALMOST ALL THE NECESSITIES OF LIFE TO THE TWO MILLION PEOPLE OF WEST BERLIN FOR ALMOST A FULL YEAR.

THE BERLIN BLOCKADE, ONE OF THE MOST CELEBRATED EVENTS OF THE COLD WAR, BEGAN IN JUNE 1948 WHEN THE SOVIET'S CUT OFF THE WESTERN ALLIES FROM ALL XAND-ACCESS TO THE FORMER GERMAN CAPITAL, IN AN EFFORT TO DRIVE OUT THE WESTERN FORCES. AS THE SOVIET RING CLOSED AROUND WEST BERLIN, GENERAL CLAY DECLARED "THEY CAN'T DRIVE US OUT SHORT OF WAR."

PRESIDENT TRUMAN RESPONDED TO GENERAL CLAY'S REQUEST AND PROVIDED ALL AVAILABLE TRANSPORT PLANES. FLYING DAY-AND-NIGHT UNDER ALL WEATHER CONDITIONS, THE AIRLIFT SUCCEED IN DELIVERING ALMOST TWO-AND-A-HALF MILLION TONS OF FOOD AND COAL TO THE BE SEIGED CITY.

(OPT) THE WINTER OF 1948-49 WAS INDEED GRIM FOR THE PEOPLE OF WEST BERLIN. YET, AS A CORRESPONDENT THERE I WAS ALSO STRUCK BY THE FACT THAT AMERICAN AND SOVIET MILITARY OFFICERS NEVER SEEMED TO LOSE RESPECT FOR EACH OTHER. FOR

EXAMPLE I SOMETIMES VISITED A LARGE HOUSE IN A WOODED AREA ON THE OUTSKIRTS OF THE ALLIED AND SOVIET ZONES, WHERE AMERICAN AND SOVIET OFFICERS DINED IN SEPARATE ROOMS, ON FOOD FROM THEIR MILITARY COMMISARIES. THIS OBVIOUSLY COULD NOT HAVE TAKEN PLACE WITHOUT AT LEAST THE TACIT APPROVAL OF THE TOP AUTHORITIES ON BOTH SIDES.

THE SOVIET BLACKADE WAS LIFTED IN THE SUMMER OF 1949, AND GENERAL CLAY RETURNED TO AMERICA A HERO. NEW YORK GAVE HIM A TICKER-TAPE PARADE. IN WASHINGTON HE WAS HAILED BY A JOINT SESSION OF CONGRESS. AND PRESIDENT TRUMAN DECORATED HIM AT THE WHITE HOUSE AND CONFERRED ON HIM THE RANK OF FULL GENERAL.

GENERAL CLAY RETIRED FROM MILITARY SERVICE SOON THEREAFTER AND BEGAN A HIGHLY SUCCESSFUL BUSINESS CAREER. BUT IN 1961, CLAY ACCEPTED A MISSION FROM PRESIDENT KENNEDY TO RETURN TO BERLIN WITH THE RANK OF AMBASSADOR, IN THE FACE OF GROWING FRICTION WITH THE EAST GERMAN AUTHORITIES. A CRISIS ENSUED AND SOVIET AND U.S. TANKS FACED EACH OTHER AT POINT-BLANK RANGE IN THE FIRST DIRECT CONFRONTATION OF THE COLD WAR. AFTER ACCOMPLISHING HIS MISSION OF RESTORING THE SITUATION IN WEST BERLIN, CLAY RETURNED TO THE UNITED STATES AND CONTINUED TO SERVE AS A SPECIAL CONSULTANT TO PRESIDENT KENNEDY ON BERLIN.

A SMALL, WIREY MAN, WITH DARTING, PIERCING EYES AND A PHOTOGRAPHIC MEMORY, GENERAL CLAY HAD WON SUCCESS EARLY AS AN ENGINEER AND A MASTER OF LOGISTICS. EARLY IN WORLD WAR TWO, HE DIRECTED THE SUPPLY SERVICES IN WASHINGTON AND THEN WA S SENT TO EUROPE TO ORGANIZE SUPPLIES ON THE U.S. NORMANDY BEACH BASE. HE OPENED THE ALMOST COMPLETELY

EMOLISHED DEEP WATER PORT OF CHERBOUG AND CONSTRUCTED A GASOLINE PIPELINE TO PARIS TO FUEL THE CONQUEST OF GERMANY.

GENERAL CLAY WAS REGARDED AS ONE OF THE WESTERN WORLD'S OUTSTANDING EXPERTS ON SOVIET TACTICS AND POLICIES. HE HELD TO THE BELIEF THAT SOME SORT OF SETTLEMENT COULD BE REACHED WITH THE SOVIET UNION, ADVOCATING A COURSE OF FIRMNESS AND ALLIED UNITY AS WELL AS A STRONG CONVENTIONAL WEAPONS DEFENSE. HE ONCE OBSERVED: "I DO NOT BELIEVE THAT FOREIGN POLICY CAN BE FULLY IMPLEMENTED BY WAVING ATOM BOMBS.

JS/PY